

Meeting Summary
February 15, 2012 - Approved

Members Present: Sanita Alrey-DeBose, Melissa Brown, Robert Caggiano, Joseph Capuano, Regina Dull, Jonathan Fink, Sean Gabaree, Chelsea Johnson, Larysa Kurylas, Tom Martin, Patrick Naehu, Manuel Ochoa, Susan Petersen, Dianne Whitaker

Members Absent: Michael Kallens, Sara Lappano, Zoe Lefkowitz, Chris Lindsay, James Mensah, Erin Roberts

Guests: Ben Gross, on behalf of Wheaton Patch; Ed Murtagh on behalf of GreenWheaton; and Karen Cordry on Behalf of Kensington Heights Civic Association (KHCA); Stacy Silber, on behalf of Lerch, Early & Brewer; Mark Rivers, on behalf of Lowe Enterprises; and Greg Ossont, Deputy Director, Department of General Services (DGS).

Call to Order: Jonathan Fink, Chair, convened the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

Approval of January Meeting Summary – A motion to approve the January 15, 2012 meeting summary was made by Ms. Petersen and seconded by Mr. Fink. The motion passed unanimously.

Redevelopment Report – Mr. Klein reported the following:

- **County Executive Budget Forum -** On January 17, the County Executive held a Budget Forum briefing at the Mid-County Recreational Center. While the forum was intended to address the operating budget, with the release of the Capital Budget that same day, much of the discussion dealt with the Capital Budget. Questions addressed housing, social services, fiscal strategy, the Wheaton Library/Recreation Center, and redevelopment impacts on small businesses
- **Councilmember Navarro is new Council representative for Wheaton** – We will extend an invitation for her to visit with WRAC as soon as her schedule permits
- **Coalition for Fair Redevelopment** – Mr. Fink will discuss the County Executive's response to WRAC's letter concerning the Coalition later in the meeting.
- **PHED/GO** committees of Council met in a combined meeting to discuss small businesses assistance in light of redevelopment. Mr. Dise and Mr. Silverman presented on behalf of the Executive Branch
- **BB&T** – will be going to Planning Board on Feb 16 for Preliminary and Site Plan approvals. No issues are anticipated.
- **Westfield Parking Waiver Letter** – The draft, which was approved at last month's meeting, was modified based on community input from Kensington Heights community. The modification advocates for improved pedestrian access.
- **Bikeshare** – Conversations with County Staff have made aware the difficulty in prioritizing sites. DOT suggested developer support. This has been included in Lowe support letter to be reviewed later

- **Washington Properties-is** moving ahead with Design Consultation at Permitting Services

County Executive's Response to WRAC Letter concerning the Coalition for Fair Redevelopment of Wheaton – Mr. Fink advised that he had received a response from the County Executive concerning WRAC's 12/16/2011 letter regarding the Coalition for Fair Redevelopment of Wheaton. The County Executive responded, with the following points looks forward to continued communication

- Existing RSC services will be accommodated and relocated in the Downtown area.
- Public Safety – Despite the recession the County will find the monies to support public safety but has recommended the suspension of the Streetscape and Façade program in order to do so
- Address parking/replace parking – The Executive has directed staff ensure adequate parking on Triangle lane and ½ of Parking Lot 13. Mr. Fink observed that this will be an issue for continued dialogue.

Mr. Fink indicated that he was encouraged by tone of the letter and the Executive's and willingness to continue to dialogue as project progresses

Mid-County Regional Services director's report - Ms. van Balen reported the following:

- The Wheaton Redevelopment CIP s in jeopardy. Funding to support the proposed Public-Private Partnership with B.F. Saul is not a done deal. Support for the project need to be conveyed.
- Councilmember Navarro strongly supports and trying to persuade council colleagues who remain undecided.
- Supporters of other projects, which the CIP is in competition with, are effectively mobilizing.
- The Wheaton-Kensington Chamber of Commerce, WUDAC, M-CAB are writing letters to the Council in support of the County Executive's CIP budget proposal for Wheaton Redevelopment.
- WRAC should to take a position on this issue and communicate it to Council by Feb 23, for inclusion in work packet, for PHED hearing on Feb. 29.
- Ms. van Balen, Mr. McGinnity and the Wheaton Urban District are working closely to design an assistance program. A Small Business Survey is being finalized, with versions in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese. The survey will be conducted both in print and online. The surveys will reassess small business perceptions about redevelopment in Wheaton, determine the current business climate and identify small business needs.
- Through community conversations, Ms. van Balen has recognized that there are a number of groups in Wheaton whose activities overlap in serving their constituencies, yet there is no unifying strategy. She is planning to convene these groups for a "Wheaton Summit" to establish a unified direction. Ms van Balen is requesting that WRAC participate in this process.

- An issue Ms. van Balen would like to have addressed by the summit: How do we activate Wheaton's Arts & Entertainment designation? – contact with Arts & Humanities and look forward to working with us.

Mr. Fink urged WRAC members to attend PHED meeting and visibly show support.

CIP for Wheaton's New Downtown – Mr. Dise advised the committee of the following:

- The County Executive's proposed CIP for Wheaton redevelopment is a definitive plan that rolls out in distinct phases, but the project is in steep competition with other projects. The county Executive remains steadfast in his support for Wheaton's redevelopment and believes that the proposed CIP supports is the best way to move redevelopment forward
- Primary challenge for Wheaton CIP is competition with Purple Line, due to the level of cost for both projects. The Council's Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy & Environment (T&E) subcommittee voted - 2 in favor 1 Abstention to fund \$90 million for a tunnel & elevator providing Purple Line access in Bethesda. The \$90 million would not be spent until some time in future when Purple Line is approved by State & Feds.
- The FY13-18 CE Recommended CIP calls for funding of \$41 million. This funding consists of 4 phases and addresses development over Metro Bus bays, construction of a Civic Plaza, underground parking that replaces surface parking on Lot 13 (addressing both current and future demand) and 5-story mixed use residential,
- What is not included, due to current market conditions, is high-rise residential which could address density increases called for in the approved Sector Plan
- Phase 1 involves temporary relocation of the busbays and interim bus operations to ½ of Lot 13 and one Side of Grandview while the project is constructed. The county is committed to keeping ½ of Lot 13 open for local businesses. Relocation, interim operations, engineering and staff resources would cost \$13 million
- Phase 2a – construction of a platform over the WMATA bus bays, bordered by Reddie Drive, Georgia Ave and Veirs Mill Rd. Platform construction, improvements to bus bays underneath, and site utilitie would cost \$27.4 million
- Phase 2b – B.F. Saul constructs 1 office tower and the hotel with parking on site. The County intends to lease ½ of the office building, relocating the. Departments of Environmental Protection and Permitting Services. The rationale for relocating these departments is the amount of customer traffic they generate. This represents no additional cost to the County as the departments being relocated currently occupy leased space. This will help activate the downtown.
- Phase 3 – B.F. Saul markets available space on platform for a second Office building
- Phase 4 – the property at tip of the platform (Viers Mill & Georgia) is constructed. Market conditions drive the timing of Phases 3 & 4.

- Park and Planning has advised that it wants to be part of this redevelopment project, but wants to be on Lot 13, not the platform. They have proposed that high-rise residential could be constructed on the remaining portion of Lot 13. Under current market conditions, this is a challenge and it is likely that County dollars would be needed for subsidy, resulting in a project that costs the County significantly more money than the proposed \$41 million CIP.
- B.F. Saul remains confident that it can attract a GSA tenant to the project, but that process can't begin until a building can be built. This is why construction of the platform is crucial.
- The anticipated timing of the project, if the CIP is approved, would be platform construction by 2015, with construction of the hotel and office building beginning 2 years later. It would take approximately 2 years for the construction to be completed.
- The County expects that B.F Saul would be responsible for a percentage of the platform cost as, as it would relate to a building foundation.
- DGS has been meeting with Council members to familiarize them with the project concept. So far, they have met with Roger Berliner, Nancy Navarro, Nancy Floreen, and George Leventhal and will meet with Marc Elrich on 2/16.

Letter in Support of Wheaton CIP funding - Ms. Dull made a motion to send a letter to the County Council in support of the County Executive's proposed CIP budget for the Wheaton Redevelopment Program. Mr. Martin seconded the motion . Approval was unanimous.

Mr. Fink urged WRAC members to attend the PHED committee meeting on the 12th if possible as a sign of support.

Bill 6-12 Economic Development Small Business Assistance – Mr. Klein provided a summary of what the bill proposes and advised that a Public hearing would be held on February 28 at 7:30 p.m. Mr. Dise indicated that the County Executive was in general support of the bill and that the Executive branch will testify in favor, with any additional comments or edits that the Executive wants to put forth. No funds have yet been appropriated. Mr. Fink suggested that WRAC send a letter to the Council in support of the bill.

Motion: Mr. Martin made a motion to draft a letter from WRAC in support of Bill 6-12
Second: Mr. Gabaree seconded the motion
The motion carried unanimously.

Revisions to WRAC Charter – Mr. Fink tabled this item due to lack of time. Mr. Klein advised that changes would be reviewed by the County Attorney, then the County Executive for approval.

Letter of Support for Lowe Enterprises project – Ms. Petersen advised that Ms. Lappano had drafted the letter and thanked her . Project review seeks full committee

report for the draft as presented. The letter Includes language urging Lowe to cooperate with tennants seeking to vacate prior to lease expiration due to the building's conversion to residential space. The letter also urges the Planning Department to consider Bikeshare as a possible amenity contribution for the project.

Motion: A motion was made by Mr. Naeheu to send, after cited edits

Second: Mr. Capuano seconded the motion

The Motion carried unanimously

Letter to DHCH re Streetscape Standards revisions – Ms. Petersen presented for review, the letter which WRAC had approved to be drafted at its January Meeting. The letter, to the Department of Housing and Community Affairs requests that resources be dedicated for revisions to the Wheaton Streetscape Standards.

Subcommittee Reports

- Economic Development – Mr. Capuano reported that the committee continued its small business visits, meeting at Moby Dick's. Similar to the groups' meeting at Los Chorros, the business owner was unfamiliar with redevelopment efforts. Mr. Ochoa observed that there also seems to be a theme of generational disconnect between members of family-owned business; some members are aware, while others are not. Mr. Capuano observed that Moby Dick is an example of a successful business, which is looking to expand if possible. The subcommittee will hold it's next meeting on March 6 at 5:30 p.m.
- Project Review – Ms. Petersen advised that the committee did not meet in January but members drafted the letters that the full committee had reviewed and approved earlier in the meeting. No meeting was proposed for February, as there are currently no projects to review. Ms Petersen thanked committee members Kurylas and Whitaker for arranging a lecture about significant architecture in the Wheaton area. It will be presented by Professor Isabel Gournay from the University of MD School of Architecture. The lecture will be on Saturday, May 12, 2:00 p.m. at the Wheaton Library
- Planning & Visioning – Mr. Martin reported that the subcommittee worked on edits to the WRAC charter and Vision statement. Discussion, planned foer this evening's meeting will be deferred until the March WRAC meeting. The subcommittee will continue to work on a proposal for WRAC to give awards to businesses or property owners who by renovation or upgrade are investing in Wheaton. The subcommittee will meet on 3/14 at 7:00 p.m. to continue to develop the proposal.

GreenWheaton Update – Mr. Murtagh advised that green Wheaton's next meeting will be held on Feb 28 at 7:30 at the Mid County Regional Center. the topic will be – Gardens – Gordon Clark from Montgomey Victoery Garden Program. A company -The Compost Crew will discuss how homeonwners can minimize their waste by diverting some to compost.

Motion to Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 8:43 p.m.